

1254837

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for up to six children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a limited company. Since the last inspection, the registered manager has been absent from the home.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 December 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 31 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Following the interim inspection in October 2018, three compliance notices were issued. At this full inspection, the inspector found evidence that all three compliance notices have been met.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/10/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
19/06/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/05/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
15/01/2018	Full	Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— - understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; - use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— - understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; - ensure that staff— - understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; - protect and promote each child's welfare; - treat each child with dignity and respect; - provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; - help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v))	06/01/2019
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— - mutual respect and trust; and - an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff -meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out	06/01/2019

in the child's relevant plans; and understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children. (Regulation 11 (1)(2)(a)(ix))	
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(b))	06/01/2019
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved	06/01/2019

by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(g))	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a))	06/01/2019

Recommendations

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

There is clear evidence that all three compliance notices issued at the last inspection have been met. The experiences of children and young people in this home continue to be mixed. However, there are now clear plans in place to address the shortfalls in practice.

Educational attendance and attainment have been an ongoing issue of concern and raised in previous inspections. There are some improvements to address this. Each child and young person now has an individual educational plan to be followed should they refuse education. The effectiveness of such plans is not yet known, as there has been little time to integrate this into practice since the last inspection.

The children and young people are happy living at the home. New incentive schemes

have led to one young person being rewarded with a mobile phone. Activities are offered regularly, and children and young people take part on a regular basis. The activities enhance the experiences of children and young people as well as supporting and building positive relationships with the adults who care for them. Since the last inspection, some children and young people have been supported by the staff team to access services that they previously declined to engage with. This will support children and young people to make progress.

Key-worker sessions are carried out and recorded. In the main, they still tend to be reactive to situations that arise rather than as a part of planned, individual work. Staff are beginning to link the residential placement plans and risk assessments. The staff team has received training and good practice examples shared of what good key-worker sessions should look like. There was clear evidence of the senior staff team driving improvements forward in this area.

Some practices within the home continue to be poor and require improvements to be good. For example, the inspector found evidence in one case of misleading information being shared in a key-worker session. Poor advice and guidance provided to children and young people are likely to hinder progress.

The use of language in records is not always helpful for children and young people to read. The recording of opinions, judgements and the use of stigmatising language remain common features of daily practice with some members of staff. Recording issues remain an area for improvement.

One young person was recently supported to deliver a presentation at a large public event. This type of experience provides opportunities for children and young people to feel valued about what they have to say and what they have to contribute. Further progress is required around ascertaining children and young people's views. In particular, the use of house meetings is necessary. There is not yet a plan in place to ensure that they occur on a regular basis. Neither is there a clear process in place for the staff team to respond to and support children's and young people's views.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Improvements have been made to the quality of risk assessments and risk management processes since the interim inspection. The inspector found evidence of the staff team following some risk assessments and effectively recording the steps they have taken to mitigate risk of harm.

Missing from home episodes have reduced in the five weeks since the interim inspection. When children and young people have been missing from the home, the appropriate protocols have been followed.

There have been no incidents that have required the use of physical intervention. Refresher training in the 'Therapeutic Crisis Intervention' model is scheduled.

The staff have received training linked to self-harming behaviours and safeguarding. Further training is scheduled. Self-harming behaviours have reduced in the period since the interim inspection.

To develop the home's practice around crisis intervention, the key-workers plan to consult with children and young people on how they would like to be supported during crisis situations. This is part of the home's improvement plan. Such steps would provide children and young people with a consistent and safe approach to managing harmful behaviours.

The home has improved its safeguarding culture. Safeguarding is now added as a stand-alone agenda item in team meetings and individual supervisions. The home has introduced a new template for supervisions that supports a more qualitative approach to facilitating supervision sessions. The effectiveness is not yet known, as this is a new development that the senior staff team have introduced.

Bullying is a current issue of concern. Some responses to incidents have not been effectively managed to ensure the safeguarding of all children and young people involved. Improvements in this area are required.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Since the interim inspection, the registered manager has been absent. The deputy manager is currently on fazed return to duties following a period of sickness. Staffing issues have been an ongoing issue of concern. There are plans in place to address this. Supervision records reflect where poor practice is being challenged. There is an ongoing recruitment process to appoint additional staff.

The absence of a registered manager has not prevented improvements and progress being made. The senior staff team, with the support of the senior management team, has taken reasonable steps to meet the requirements in the compliance notices. There is a plan and clear system in place to drive improvements forward and address shortfalls in practice. The effectiveness of implementing such strategies is not yet known, given the short period of time that has elapsed since the interim inspection.

The staff team recognises areas that require further improvements. The aspirations and motivation of the senior staff team have had positive effects. The improvements made have lifted staff morale, motivating them to continue their improvement journey. Comments such as, 'They lead us by example' and 'I feel supported and have clear direction of where we need to be to be good', are phrases used by those staff members spoken with.

The registered manager has not ensured that all mandatory training is in date. Since the interim inspection, staff have received training around safeguarding in the digital world and self-harm. The deputy manager has taken steps to ensure that all staff, including relief staff, complete mandatory training.

The senior staff team has ensured that there has been an audit of each child or young person's file. Previous inspections have highlighted that the efficiency of monitoring and auditing systems in place have fluctuated. The new systems in place have been effective at identifying shortfalls.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1254837

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Together for Children Sunderland Limited

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Burdon Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear
SR2 7DN

Responsible individual: Martin Birch

Registered manager: Suzanne Metcalfe

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, social care inspector

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